

SOCIOLOGICAL SURVEY

NATO-UKRAINE RELATIONS IN THE PUBLIC FOCUS



Valeriy CHALY,
*International Programmes
Director, Razumkov Centre*



Mykhailo PASHKOV,
*Leading Expert,
Razumkov Centre*

How do Ukrainian citizens regard NATO? Do they support the idea of Ukraine's accession to the Alliance? What is their view of the prospects of the Alliance's eastward expansion and Ukraine's co-operation with it? To find the answers to those questions, in June 2002, Razumkov Centre held a sociological survey¹. Its results were presented at the International Conference devoted to the 5th anniversary of the NATO-Ukraine Charter "NATO-Ukraine: Main Achievements and Prospects for Mutual Relations".

NATO-Ukraine: the state of relations

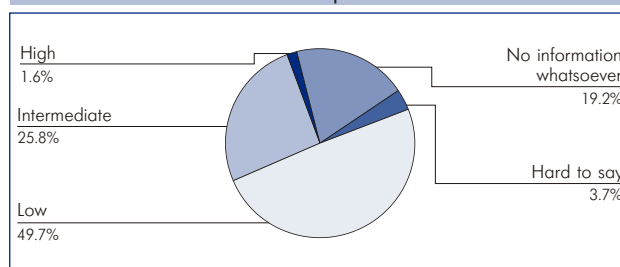
After signing the NATO-Ukraine Charter on a Distinctive Partnership (1997), co-operation in political, economic, military, scientific issues, as well as in the field of civil emergency planning and defence reform was developing at a fast pace. Contacts were also strengthened in the context of peacekeeping operations².

In the first half of 2002 Ukraine's contacts with NATO were on the rise. In March, the Berlin Conference discussed elements of the new Euro-Atlantic course of Ukraine. In May, the NATO-Ukraine Commission meeting in Reykjavik announced accession to NATO as the goal of the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine. On May 23, Ukraine's NSDC meeting took a decision on the new strategy of Ukraine's relations with NATO, and on July 8, 2002, the President of Ukraine signed a Decree enacting that decision³. Hence, there are reasons to speak about the expansion of Ukraine's contacts with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Meanwhile, the progress and development of those contacts are in fact a prerogative for representatives of the higher echelons of state power — a narrow circle

of military and civilian experts. Contacts with NATO are largely developing "behind the scenes" and are not accompanied with a broad information campaign, which in turn explains the low awareness of citizens about the Alliance's activities. Only 1.6% of respondents called the level of their knowledge about NATO high, every fourth — intermediate. Meanwhile, two thirds of citizens either called their awareness about NATO low (49.7%), or had no information about the Alliance (!) whatsoever (19.2%) (Diagram "How do you assess your level of knowledge regarding NATO activities?").

**How do you assess your level
of knowledge regarding NATO activities?**
% of the polled



¹ The poll was held by Razumkov Centre Sociological Service between June 17-25, 2002, in 24 regions, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Kyiv. 2,006 respondents aged above 18 were polled. Sample error makes 2.3%. Method of polling — personal interview.

² For concrete instances of deepening NATO-Ukraine co-operation see the materials presented in this magazine.

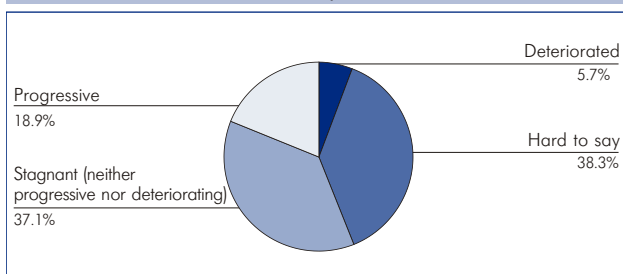
³ Unfortunately, those are restricted documents, which does not help form a consolidated position of the political actors and a wide public in support for Ukraine's integration into NATO.

What are the reasons for citizens' poor knowledge about the Alliance? **First** of all, the earlier sociological surveys conducted by Razumkov Centre showed that foreign policy issues concerned them far less than the internal social and economic problems. This seems natural, given the present situation in the country. It would be strange, to say the least, if citizens were worried about the progress of implementation of the Partnership for Peace Programme more than about the rate of unemployment and timely payment of wages and pensions. **Second**, the authorities do not care to spread unbiased and comprehensive information about the Alliance's activities.

In terms of the deficit of information, a significant share of Ukrainian citizens view NATO under the influence of either the distorted stereotypes of the past or the assessments of the Russian media that up until recently have been far from friendly to the Alliance.

Therefore, it is no wonder that **the public in general is cautiously sceptical about the present state of Ukraine's relations with the Alliance**. As one may see in Diagram "How would you evaluate the present state of relations between NATO and Ukraine?", 37.1% of respondents termed it as "stagnant", 18.9% — as "progressive". Every twentieth respondent (5.7%) chose the negative assessment — "deteriorated". The greatest share of the polled (38.3%) declined to give an answer.

How would you evaluate the present state of relations between NATO and Ukraine?
% of the polled



The Ukrainian visit by a delegation of the North Atlantic Council led by NATO Secretary General G. Robertson on July 9-10, 2002, that marked a new step at rapprochement between NATO and Ukraine, and the beginning of a full-scale discussion of representatives of the Ukrainian authorities, MPs, public figures and experts with their foreign vis-à-vis about the prospects of Ukraine's membership in the Alliance may change the situation, if they bring appreciable results.

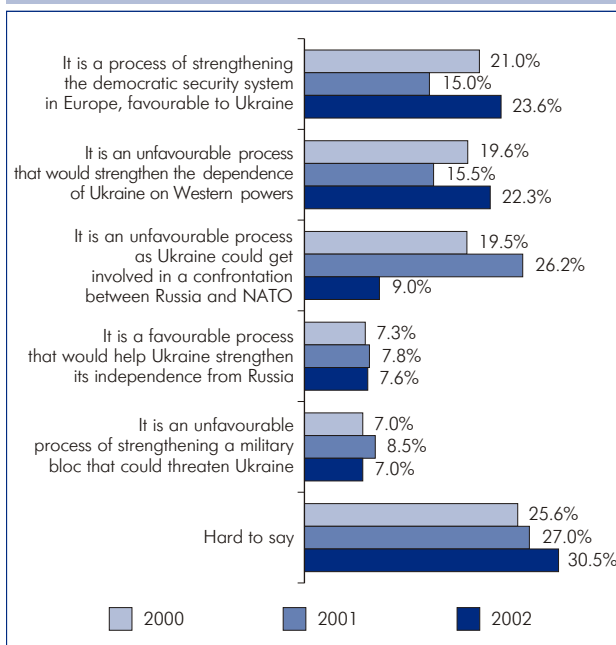
At the same time, it would be premature to draw the conclusion about a new quality of co-operation. On the one hand, for the Alliance preoccupied with preparation for the important Prague summit, the Ukrainian question is not a priority. On the other hand, for the Ukrainian initiative of joining NATO to look convincing in the eyes of its Euro-Atlantic partners, it should be backed with a number of internal decisions⁴.

The level of relations with NATO will be determined not by the scope of pro-NATO rhetoric of the Ukrainian authorities and repeated mention of the importance of Euro-Atlantic co-operation but by the diligent everyday work at approaching the standards of the Alliance.

NATO eastward enlargement

Compared to the previous years, the attitude of Ukrainians to NATO eastward enlargement is evidently **changing for the better**. This is clear from Diagram "How do you assess the NATO enlargement process?" which compares the results of three sociological surveys⁵. Their correlation demonstrates some showy trends.

How do you assess the NATO enlargement process?
% of the polled



First of all, in the eyes of the public, the movement of NATO to the East is no longer perceived as aggressive military expansion threatening Ukraine. While in August 2001, 50.2% of the polled called the enlargement of the Alliance an unfavourable development for Ukraine, for one or another reason, in June, 2002, that indicator fell to 38.3%. **Second**, the share of those who fear that the Alliance's expansion may get Ukraine involved in a confrontation between Russia and NATO fell drastically (almost three-fold!), from 26.2% to 9%. Therefore, the public fears of being caught between the Western "hammer" and the Eastern "anvil" sharply went down. **Third**, there is an evident (8.6%) increase in the number of respondents convinced that NATO enlargement is favourable towards Ukraine's process of strengthening the democratic security system in Europe. **Fourth**, the fears that the process of NATO enlargement may increase Ukraine's dependence on Western powers somewhat increased (by 6.8%).

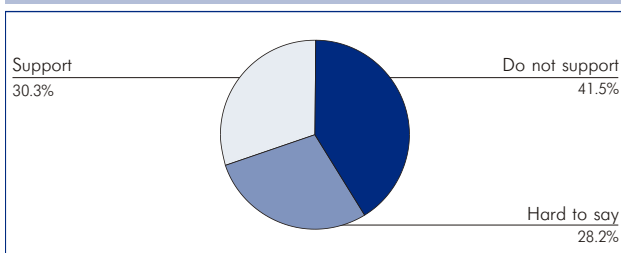
⁴ Chaly V. On Some Legal Aspects of Ukraine's Integration to NATO. — *Zerkalo Nedeli*, June 15, 2002, p.3; <http://www.uceps.com.ua>.

⁵ Hereinafter we compare the results of the above-mentioned survey and the surveys conducted by Razumkov Centre on May 26 - June 4, 2000, and August 14-23, 2001.

At the same time, the number of those who are undecided about the Alliance's movement to the East increases. Today, Ukrainians are more uncertain and doubtful about that process than "yesterday" — in 2000-2001, when the negative stereotypes clearly dominated.

However, the positive shifts in the views of NATO enlargement have not yet been transformed into support for that process. The relative majority of respondents (41.5%) do not support that process (*Diagram "Do you support the process of NATO's eastward expansion?"*).

Do you support the process of NATO's eastward expansion? % of the polled



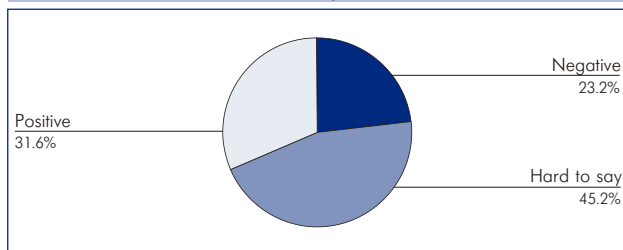
Support was demonstrated by nearly a third of the polled (30.3%), quite a few respondents (28.2%) declined to answer. Such a position of the public cannot be attributed only to the poor information about the Alliance. Evidently, people are aware that today, Ukraine lies beyond both the Western and the Eastern models of military-political integration. Earlier surveys conducted by Razumkov Centre demonstrated that Ukrainian citizens were unwilling to join the Tashkent Treaty, but integration into the Alliance was also causing doubts.

What does the Alliance, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, bring to Ukraine? *First of all*, the process of enlargement actually coincides in time and space with the EU transformation — the zone of security, political and economic stability on the continent is expanding. *Second*, the Alliance's enlargement conditions — its transformation from a military-political bloc into a more flexible regional security structure. *Third*, NATO enlargement involving the countries neighbouring on Ukraine will, on the one hand, promote Ukraine's interests in the Alliance, while on the other hand, they will expand the sphere of co-operation with NATO in terms of geography and quality, and strengthen Ukraine's role in the formation of the new European security architecture.

The "Russian factor" in NATO-Ukraine relations

Ukrainians are split in regards to deepening co-operation between Russia and NATO, with positive assessments slightly in the lead (*Diagram "Is the deepening of relations between Russia and NATO a positive or negative process for Ukraine?"*).

Is the deepening of relations between Russia and NATO a positive or negative process for Ukraine? % of the polled

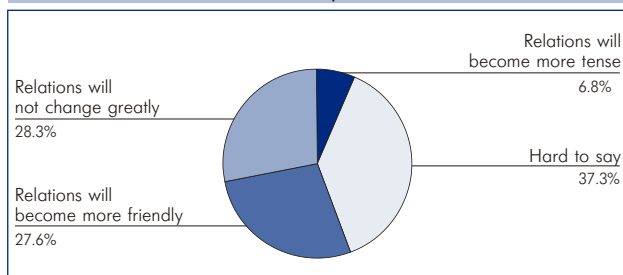


The "Russian factor" has always been present in the relations between Kyiv and Brussels. Recently, its influence has been changing. Despite the strongly negative position of the Russian Federation on the eastward expansion of the Alliance, the Ukrainian initiatives of integration into NATO did not especially irritate official Moscow. The restraint of our northern neighbour is attributable to the readiness of the Russian leadership to develop de-politicised, pragmatic co-operation with the Alliance — in May 2002, a new format of relations between Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was approved.

Russia brings its relations with the Alliance to a new level, with the help of a new structure — the Russia-NATO Council, which should ensure: the possibility of influencing some NATO decisions from within; effective co-operation at fighting international terrorism; and the "removal" of possible conflict situations⁶.

The overall assessment of Russia-NATO relations by the public logically corresponds to the rather reserved forecast of the immediate prospects of relations between the Russian Federation and the Alliance. 28.3% of the people polled do not expect any significant changes, roughly as many (27.6%) believe that the relations will become more friendly (*Diagram "How will NATO-Russia relations evolve within the next five years?"*).

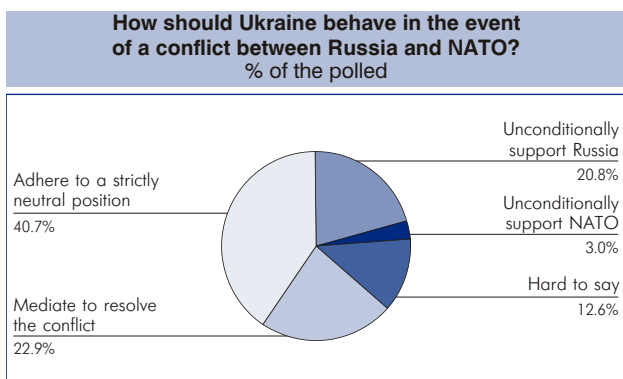
How will NATO-Russia relations evolve within the next five years? % of the polled



Such a picture seems natural, since the efficiency of a new formula of NATO relations with the Russian Federation is yet to be tested by time, and pathetic declarations — backed with practical co-operation between Russia and the enlarged Alliance.

⁶ The attitude of Russians to deepening co-operation with the Alliance looks surprising given the official position of the Russian Federation in not welcoming NATO's eastward expansion. According to the May (2002) poll held by the All-Russian Centre for Public Opinion Survey, when asked "Should Russia seek NATO membership?", 35% of Russians answered "yes" and "rather yes than no"; 47% — "no" and "rather no than yes"; 18% — declined to answer.

As we already mentioned, Ukraine's public is now less concerned that Ukraine may be involved in a conflict between Russia and NATO. Should this happen, what should Ukraine do? According to Diagram "How should Ukraine behave in the event of a conflict between Russia and NATO?", every fifth respondent believes that Ukraine should support Russia. Only 3% of the polled are sure that they should support the Alliance.



Meanwhile, the absolute majority of the polled is sure that Ukraine should not side with anyone in such a hypothetical conflict: Ukraine should either adhere to a strictly neutral position (40.7%) or act as mediator in the conflict settlement (22.9%).

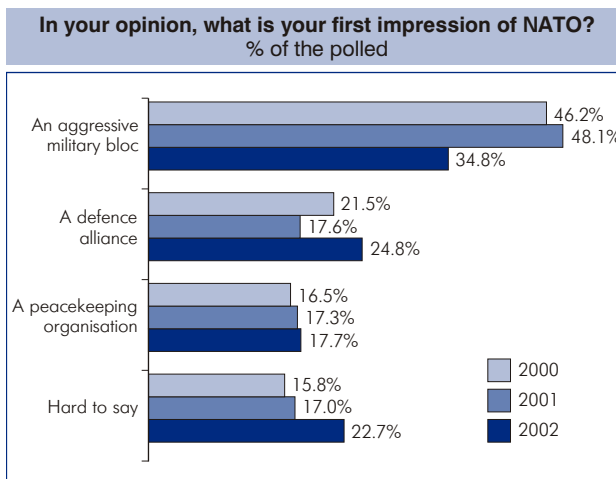
The rapprochement between Russia and the Alliance surely improved the atmosphere in the Ukraine-Russia-NATO triangle but did not make it cloudless. *First of all*, the views of Moscow and Kyiv on the process of NATO's eastward expansion are diametrically opposite. *Second*, despite all restraint of official Moscow, V.Putin unequivocally alluded to the "quite possible" participation of Ukraine in the Russia-NATO Council, which hardly complies with Ukraine's idea of full membership in the Alliance. One may expect that Russia will press Ukraine exactly in this sphere. *Third*, the present toleration of Russia's Black Sea Fleet stationing in Ukraine by Brussels, Kyiv and Moscow in the near future will inevitably give place to the need of resolving that problem.

NATO in the eyes of Ukrainian citizens

NATO may be viewed in many different ways, but, *first of all*, one cannot but reckon with that most powerful military-political bloc in the world forming the core of the European security system, as well as one cannot stop its eastward expansion. *Second*, Ukraine does not have such a high level of economically and politically beneficial military co-operation with any other international organisation (country). *Finally*, today, there is no reasonable alternative to deepening co-operation, as was proved by the experience of Ukraine's neighbours, including Russia.

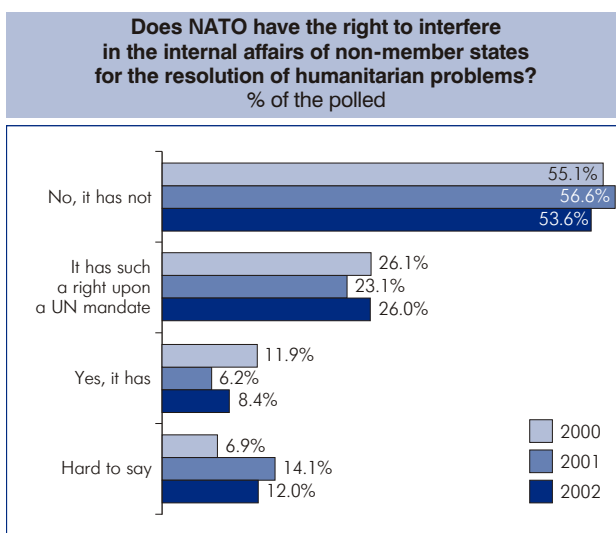
The results of the polls held in 2000-2001 showed that almost half of Ukrainians had a negative opinion of the Alliance, seeing it as an aggressive military bloc (Diagram "In your opinion, what is your first impression of NATO?").

The reasons for that are many, and the experts of Razumkov Centre have already written about them⁷.



However, the diagram shows a strong positive trend in the Ukrainian perception of NATO between late 2001 and June, 2002. The number of respondents who view NATO as an aggressive military bloc fell drastically (by 13.3%), compared to 2001; at the same time, the share of those who see NATO as a defence alliance noticeably increased (by 7.2%); the number of respondents seeing the Alliance as a peacekeeping organisation remained stable. Hence, **by contrast to the previous years, now, the share of citizens who have a positive rather than negative perception of the Alliance is much higher.**

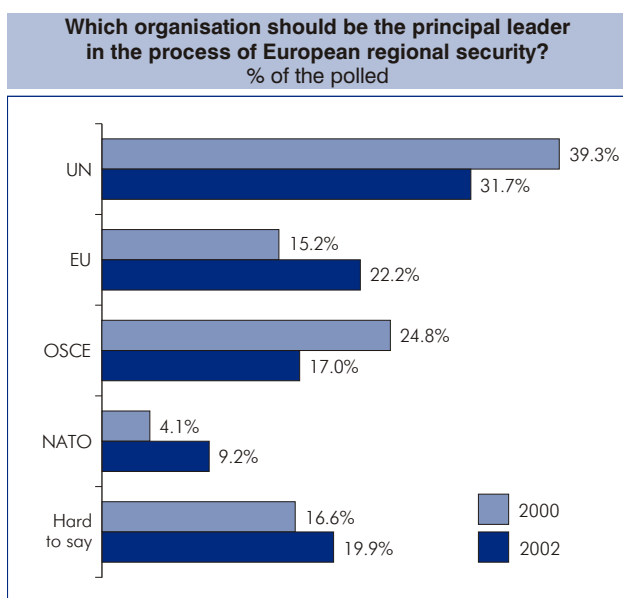
Despite those positive changes, the general attitude of the public still demonstrates the inertia of the negative perception of the NATO Balkan campaign. This deals not with the somewhat specific attitude of Ukrainians to Yugoslavia but rather with the strong conviction of the majority of citizens that NATO has no right whatsoever to interfere with the affairs of sovereign states even for the solution of humanitarian problems (Diagram "Does NATO have the right to interfere in the internal affairs of non-member states for the resolution of humanitarian problems?").



⁷ Polyakov L., Pashkov M. Ukraine-NATO: Warm... Warmer? — *Zerkalo Nedeli*, May 11, 2002, pp.1,3, <http://www.uceps.com.ua>.

According to this diagram, the majority of Ukrainian citizens stick to the opinion that NATO does not have such a right; only a small share of the polled abide by the opposite opinion; nearly a quarter of the polled admit the possibility of interference but only sanctioned by the UN.

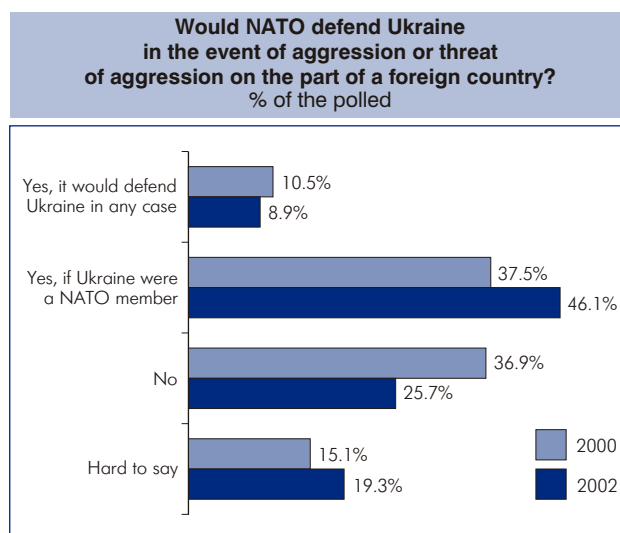
Such views are in line with the hierarchy of organisations called to guarantee security in Europe in the eyes of the public (Diagram "Which organisation should be the principal leader in the process of European regional security?")



As one may see from the diagram, the greater share of citizens give preference to the UN, leaving NATO on the bottom of the list. Meanwhile, the assessments of 2000-2002 show some dynamics. The support for the UN and OSCE distinctly weakened (by 7.6% and 7.8%, respectively). At the same time, more votes were given for the EU (7%) and NATO (5.1%).

To be sure, no country in the world, even the most powerful one, can guarantee its security relying only on its own forces. The problem of security is resolved through participation in the system of regional (global) security, and reliance on faithful allies who are sure to come to assistance in the event of aggression. The Alliance's members have such guarantees. Non-allied Ukraine has none. Really, today, the threat of an external aggression against Ukraine seems hypothetical, but one should not neglect it. In this respect, the public opinion of the possible actions of the Alliance in a situation critical for Ukraine is of interest (Diagram "Would NATO defend Ukraine in the event of aggression or threat of aggression on the part of a foreign country?").

According to this diagram, with the steadily low share of respondents sure of NATO assistance, the share of those who do not believe in such assistance fell drastically (by 11.2%). By contrast, the number of people convinced in the assistance of the Alliance on the condition of Ukraine's membership in NATO increased (by 8.6%). Hence, almost half of all citizens believe that if Ukraine were to join NATO, it would obtain guarantees of assistance in the event of external aggression.



Summing up, it may be stated that the attitude of Ukrainian citizens to NATO shows positive trends: the Alliance is now more rarely seen as a belligerent warrior. At the same time, the non-admission of NATO forcible acts is evident. In the future, the attitude of Ukrainian citizens to the Alliance will probably depend on the trends in its development and the avoidance of miscalculations that visibly lowered its authority in the eyes of Ukraine's public in the past.

How to co-operate with NATO?

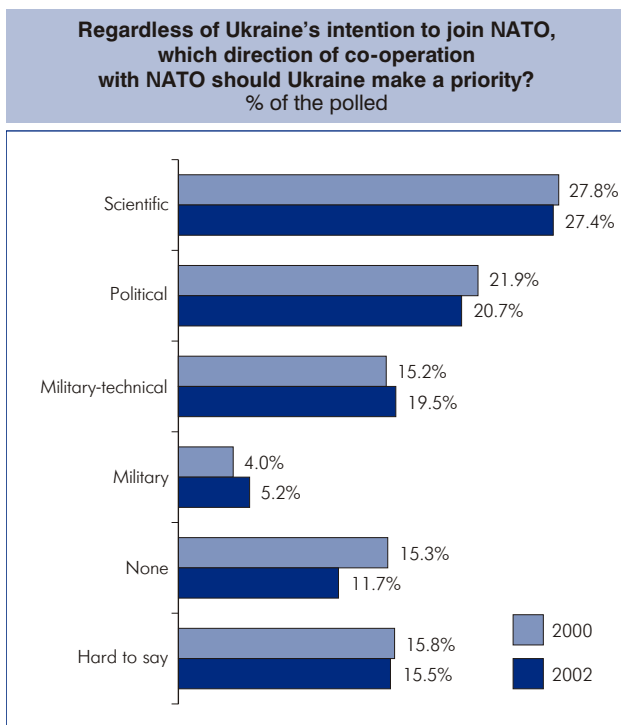
The partnership with the Alliance promotes Ukraine's security, strengthens its position in formation of the European security system, and promotes accomplishment of the military reform. There is a huge potential for co-operation between Kyiv and Brussels in the defence sector. Ukraine is not a consumer of, but a potent contributor to stability and security on the continent. This country has military transport capabilities not available to many NATO member states; it may greatly contribute to the development of the ABM system, space technologies, etc. The Ukrainian military has vast peacekeeping experience.

It is clear however that the prospects of Ukraine's integration into NATO will be determined by its compliance with not military, but primarily "civilian" requirements of the Alliance — the first block of the NATO Membership Action Plan, in particular, envisages guarantees of the rule of law and human rights, establishment of democratic civilian control over the Armed Forces, promotion of stability and well-being in the applicant country through the provision of economic liberty and social justice. (Here, the requirements of NATO and the EU entirely coincide).

In this context, deepening of co-operation with NATO is undoubtedly vital for Ukraine, since it presumes serious internal transformations necessary for this country irrespective of the prospects of membership in the Alliance.

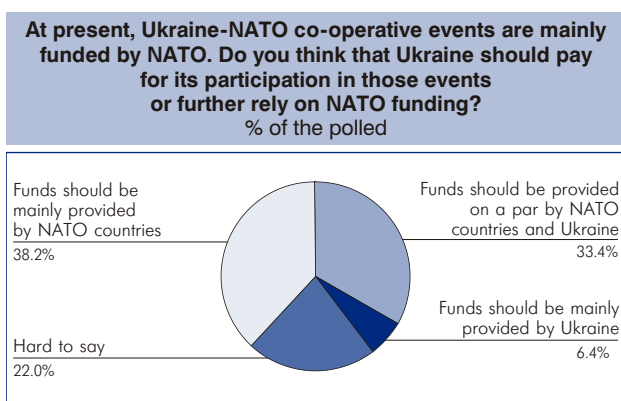
Demonstratively, the majority of our citizens view co-operation with NATO exactly under this angle, not giving preference to khaki-coloured institutions, but

first of all — to science and politics⁸. These views have been stable for at least the two recent years (Diagram “Regardless of Ukraine’s intention to join NATO, which direction of co-operation with NATO should Ukraine make a priority?”).



Co-operation with NATO encompasses many sectors, e.g.: accomplishment of conversion projects; servicemen training and retraining; struggle with natural disasters; improvement of the environmental situation; and scientific contacts. It develops mainly at the Alliance’s expense and is surely beneficial for Ukraine.

The public views of the financial side of partnership with the Alliance are presented in the diagram below.



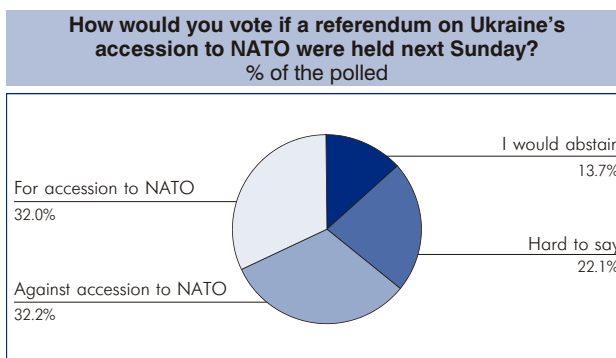
The greatest share (38.2%) of the polled believes that the financial burden of co-operation should be born by the Alliance; a third (33.4%) is sure that the national security and approach to the Alliance should be paid for at least on a par with NATO; only a small share (6.4%) of respondents suggests that those events should be funded by Ukraine. These figures prove that the public is aware that Ukraine’s economy immensely lags behind the powerful economies of the Alliance and at least for the time being is unable to support on its own the numerous events held jointly with the Alliance.

It may be assumed that the public opinion on Ukraine’s co-operation with NATO will largely depend on the effectiveness of the steps taken by the authorities for meeting exactly the “civilian” requirements of the Alliance. Everything will depend on the consistency of efforts at the reformation of the national economy and the system of state power; on the effectiveness of democratic transformations and consolidation of the fundamentals of civil society; on the results of the reform of the Armed Forces of Ukraine; introduction of civilian control in the military sector; and, finally, on the degree of openness and lucidity of the activity of the Ukrainian authorities on all levels towards fellow citizens and foreign partners.

Accession to NATO

The process of Ukraine’s integration into NATO will last longer than a year or two. However, given the need for wide public support for the decision to join the Alliance, it is highly important to know as soon as possible, citizens’ answers to this hypothetical referendum on the issue stated below⁹.

According to Diagram “How would you vote, if a referendum on Ukraine’s accession to NATO were held next Sunday?”, 32% of the polled would vote for Ukraine’s accession to NATO, 32.2% — against, the rest either declined to answer (22.1%), or would not vote at all (13.7%).



How should one assess these results? A third of votes in favour of accession is a decent figure, to start. In some of the countries — present candidates for accession to the Alliance — the level of support at the

⁸ It is demonstrative that at present, Ukraine’s co-operation with NATO develops within the framework of 23 committees, only four of them dealing with military problems, the rest — with civilian.

⁹ Referendum on accession to NATO in the candidate countries is not mandatory for joining the Alliance. If the population sufficiently supports such accession, the results of public opinion polls may be taken into account. For instance, at the end of June 2002, the head of the Lithuanian Government A. Brazauskas, expressed doubt about the need for such a referendum, arguing that the results of public opinion polls repeatedly showed that the accession of Lithuania to the Alliance found the support of nearly 60% of the population, and therefore, there was no need to spend tens of millions of Lits on the event that would only prove the views of the majority of the population. See: Interfax, June 25, 2002.

beginning of the road to NATO was roughly the same. At the same time, it may be assumed that the majority of those who abstained may join the ranks of adherents of accession to the Alliance, provided that co-operation with NATO brings real benefits in the social and economic sphere.

The attitude to the accession to NATO has distinct age differences. According to the table, the share of adherents to the accession goes down with age. The youngest age group (18-29 years) has the highest number of adherents, and the lowest number of opponents to accession — 43.4%³ 23.6% respectively.

How would you vote if a referendum on Ukraine's accession to NATO were held next Sunday?
% of the polled

	Age groups				
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
For accession to NATO	43.4%	34.7%	29.3%	29.8%	21.6%
Against accession to NATO	23.6%	28.2%	32.4%	38.3%	39.7%
Hard to say	21.7%	25.1%	22.2%	18.4%	22.7%
I would abstain	11.3%	12.0%	16.1%	13.5%	16.0%

The ratio gradually changes in favour of the opponents to accession as the populace increases in age (30-39 years): 34.7% — “for”, and 28.2% — “against”. The age group of 40-49 years presents a kind of watershed: there, the share of opponents prevails: “for” — 29.3%, “against” — 32.4%. In the elderly age groups, the share of opponents to accession increases.

Speaking at the conference, Ukraine's Foreign Minister A.Zlenko commented on these results as follows: “...the overwhelming majority of those who gave their voices in favour of the Alliance were Ukrainian

youths. They no longer look at NATO through the prism of the Soviet stereotypes. This is a new generation of Ukrainians that believes in a united Europe”¹⁰.

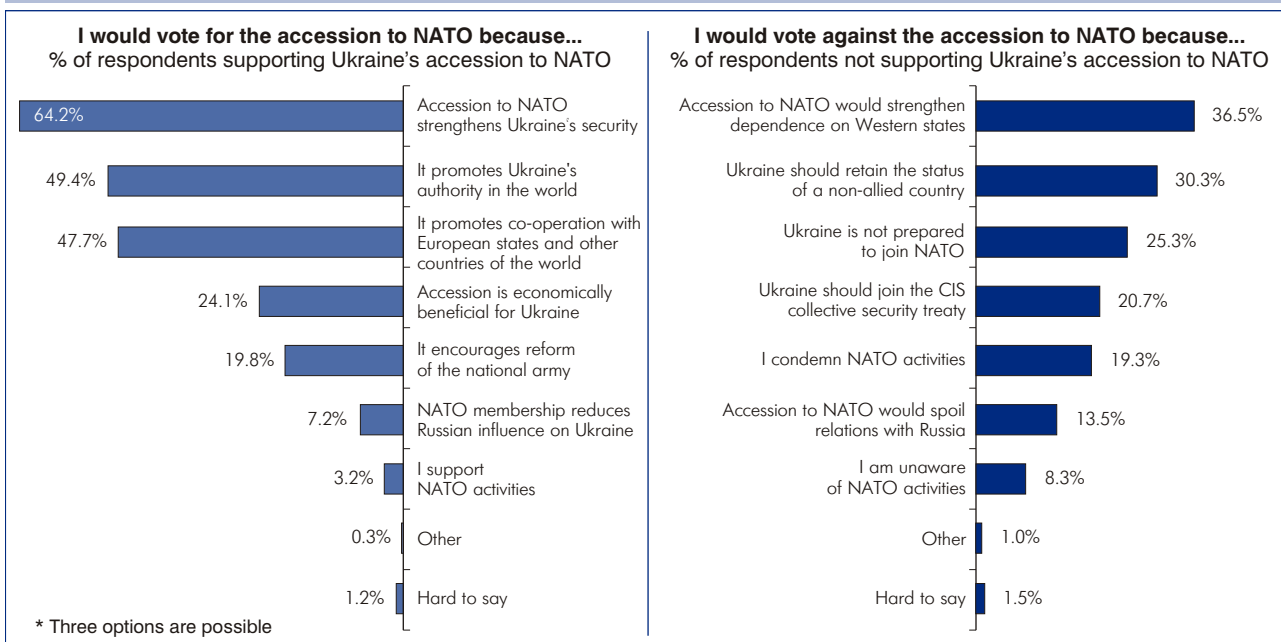
Factors of support/non-support for Ukraine's accession to NATO. The adherents of accession to NATO base their choice primarily on geopolitical factors: they say that accession to NATO would promote Ukraine's security, international authority and co-operation with the countries of Europe and the rest of the world. Other possible gains included economic benefits of the accession and the Alliance's assistance in the reform of the national army. Strikingly, only 3.2% of the polled mentioned support for NATO activities as a motive influencing their choice (Diagram “What reasons influence your decision concerning Ukraine's accession to NATO?”).

The majority of the opponents of accession fear that joining the Alliance will strengthen Ukraine's dependence on the West; they are followed by those who believe that Ukraine should retain the status of a non-allied country; quite a few of those polled pointed to a purely pragmatic issue — Ukraine's unreadiness to join NATO.

When should an application for joining the Alliance be filed, and when will Ukraine be ready for full-scale integration? These questions were put before the adherents of Ukraine's accession to NATO (Diagram “When should Ukraine file an application to join NATO?” and “When will Ukraine be ready to join NATO?”).

Almost two thirds of the adherents of accession to the Alliance are sure that Ukraine should make its intentions clear and file an application to join NATO either immediately (34%) or in the next 2-3 years (28.7%). Far fewer people believe that an application should be filed later.

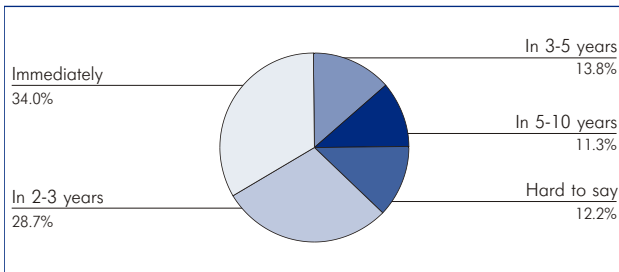
What reasons influence your decision concerning Ukraine's accession to NATO?*
% of the polled



¹⁰ See the address to the Conference by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine A.Zlenko published in this magazine.



When should Ukraine file an application to join NATO?
% of respondents supporting Ukraine's accession to NATO



People cautiously assess the level of Ukraine's readiness to join the Alliance. Only one in five (19.1%) polled believe that Ukraine is ready for accession; the greater share (39.5%) of respondents gave Ukraine 3-5 years for preparation; another 18.4% is sure that Ukraine will be ready to join only in 5-10 years.

Such a reserve in assessments is quite natural, since NATO is not just a military bloc, and the questions of political and economic development of the applicant states are not of secondary importance. As we already noted, accession to the Alliance in the first place means compliance with the European social and economic standards, democratic norms and principles.

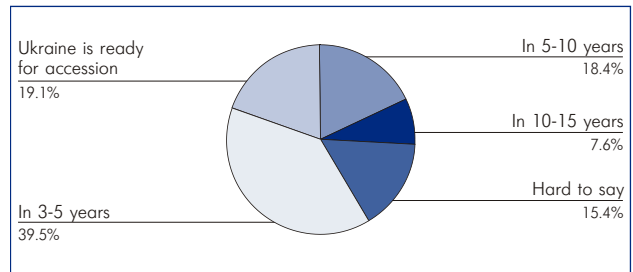
To be sure, the course of Euro-Atlantic integration cannot be pursued only through political declarations of the state leaders — consolidation of society and cohesion of efforts of all branches of power are needed.

The position of Ukraine's new Parliament on Euro-Atlantic integration will become clear during the preparation and approval of the new Foreign Policy Fundamentals of Ukraine. However, it may already be stated that this Parliament is more inclined to deepen co-operation with NATO than the previous ones. The results of questioning party and bloc leaders by Razumkov Centre on the eve of parliamentary elections showed that all parties and blocs present in Parliament (with the exception of CPU) support deepening of contacts between Ukraine and the Alliance¹¹. The readiness of the new parliament members to develop co-operation with NATO was also demonstrated by the heads of the concerned parliamentary committees speaking at the Conference "NATO-Ukraine: Main Achievements and Prospects for Mutual Relations"¹².

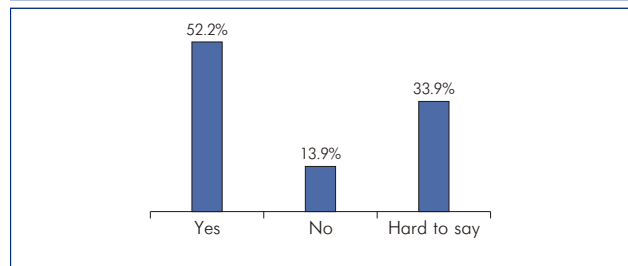
At the same time, one should be aware that NATO-Ukraine partnership is a two-way street. How ready is NATO to meet Ukraine halfway? Is the Alliance interested in Ukraine's accession? More than half (52.2%) of the polled are sure that NATO is interested in Ukraine's membership; the opposite opinion was expressed by only 13.9%; a third (33.9%) declined to give an answer (Diagram "Is NATO interested in Ukraine's accession to its organisation?").

One may agree that NATO is interested in having Ukraine in its ranks, but this is true for a Ukraine that is politically and economically stable, with a high level of democracy and social protection.

When will Ukraine be ready to join NATO?
% of respondents supporting Ukraine's accession to NATO



Is NATO interested in Ukraine's accession to its organisation?
% of the polled



Regional distribution of assessments

The attitude of people towards NATO and Ukraine's co-operation with it significantly varies by region. In the western regions of Ukraine, the attitude to the Alliance is generally positive, in the eastern and southern regions people are more critical. The assessments of respondents in the central regions generally coincide with the Ukrainian average indicators.

The regional differences in views may be attributed to the fact that the Russian-speaking share of the population, dominated by pro-Russian sentiments, is more dominant in the East and South of Ukraine; there, border contacts with Russia are stronger, as is Russian influence. By contrast, in the western regions people have "pro-Western" sympathies and are traditionally disposed to contacts with the neighbouring countries — NATO members or candidates for the Alliance membership: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Romania.

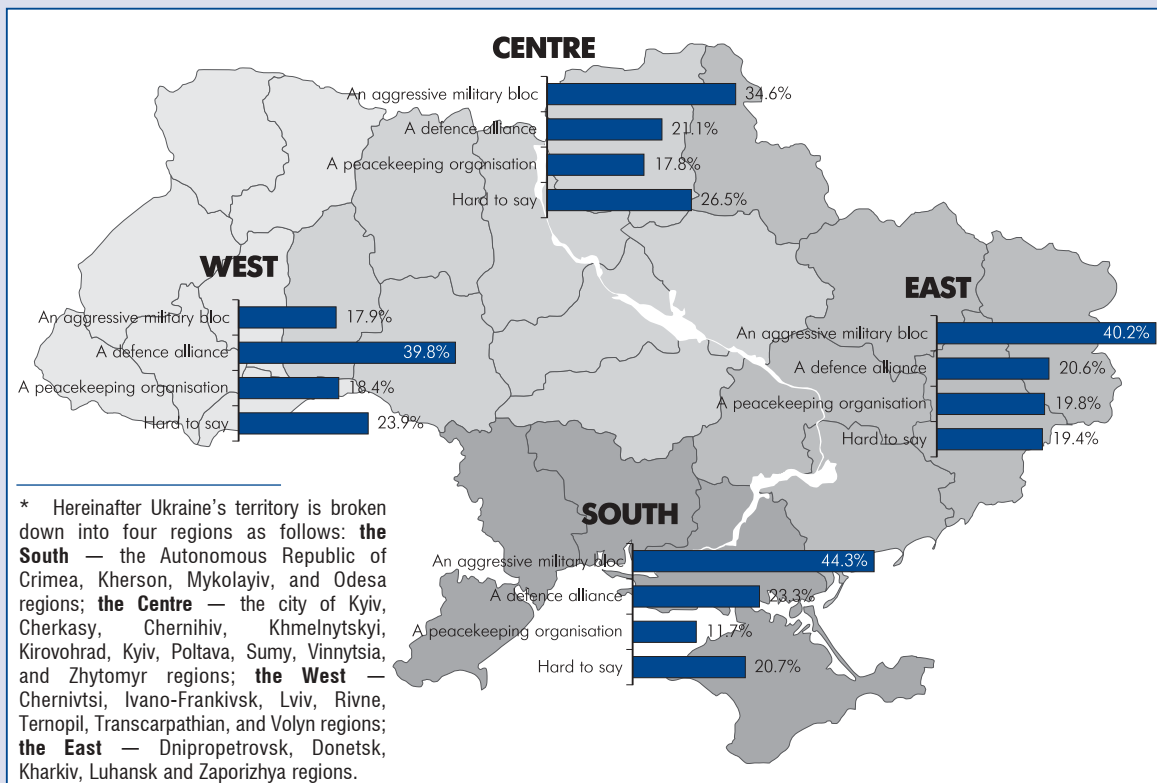
The maps illustrate the regional differences on the issues of: perception of NATO, the process of its enlargement, and deepening of contacts between the North Atlantic Alliance and Russia. The regional differences are especially strong regarding the views of respondents on the accession to NATO. The West is clearly dominated by pro-NATO sentiments: 45.4% (almost half!) of its population would vote for accession to the Alliance. In the South and East, the picture is entirely different.

With time, the gap between the West of Ukraine, on the one hand, and the East and South, on the other hand, may either widen or narrow. Everything will depend on whether the people in Lviv, Donetsk and Odesa feel the concrete results of interaction with the

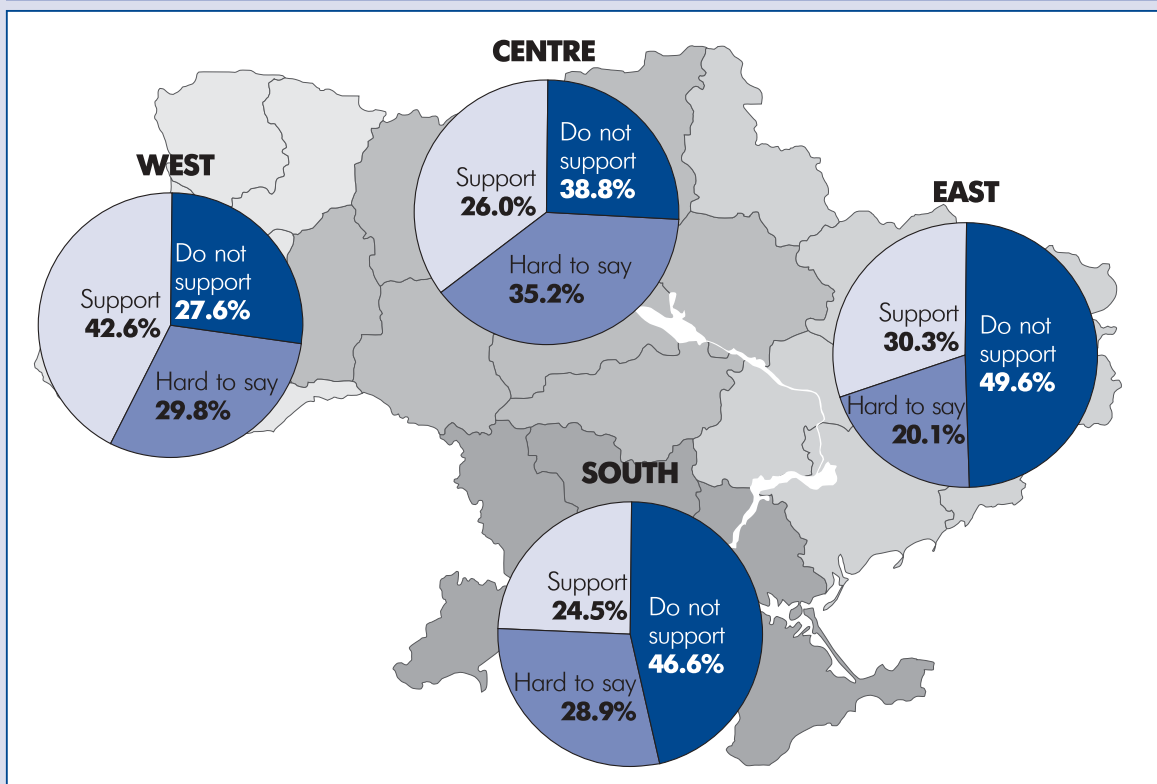
¹¹ See: V.Chaly, M.Pashkov. "Ukraine's Foreign Policy after the Parliamentary Elections: Adjustment Possible?" — *Zerkalo Nedeli*, March 16, 2002, p.5, <http://www.uceps.com.ua>.

¹² See the addresses by Head of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Committee on European Integration B.Tarasyuk and Head of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Foreign Affairs Committee D.Tabachnyk published in this magazine.

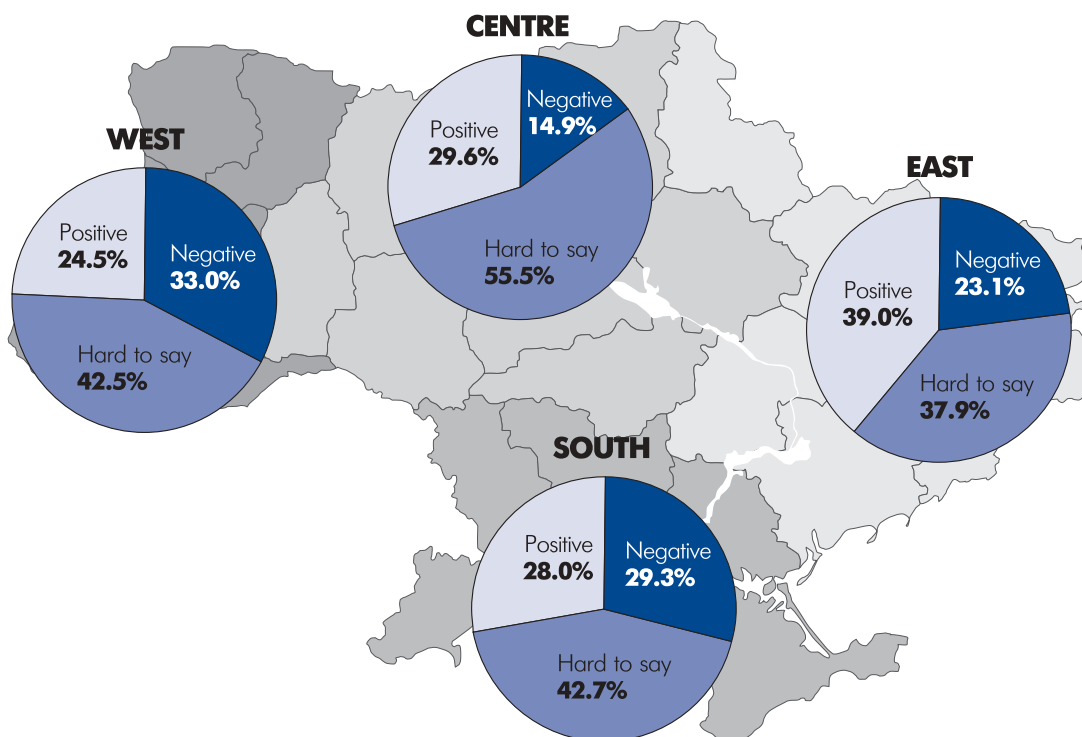
In your opinion, what is your first impression of NATO? % of the polled



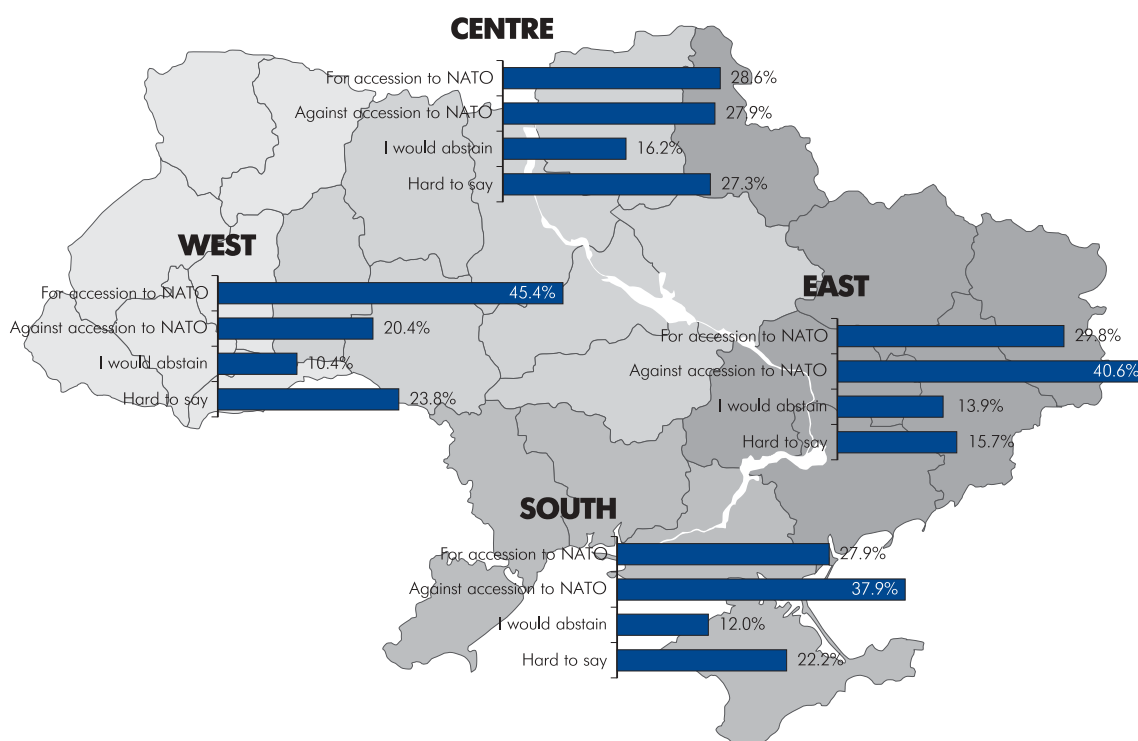
Do you support the process of NATO's eastward expansion? % of the polled



**Is the deepening of relations between Russia and NATO
a positive or negative process for Ukraine?**
% of the polled



**How would you vote if a referendum on Ukraine's
accession to NATO were held next Sunday?**
% of the polled



Alliance members, first of all — in the civilian sectors, on the condition of better information about the real gains of such co-operation.

Conclusions

Today, we witness the process of the formation of public attitude towards problems of key importance for Ukraine: how to further co-operate with NATO, and the question of what will NATO eastward enlargement and the course towards the accession to the Alliance proclaimed by the state leadership bring to Ukraine? The present controversy and uncertainty of the public are evidently caused by the complexity of the issue and its relevance to many external and internal factors, and by the lack of relevant information.

The results of the performed survey give reason to state that NATO is losing the traits of an aggressor in the eyes of the Ukrainian citizens. Positive attitude towards NATO and support for the idea of Ukraine's accession to the Alliance are present in a large share of the Ukrainian youth. However, Ukrainians are still becoming increasingly quiet in regards to NATO eastward enlargement. The public concern that Ukraine may get involved in a confrontation between Russia and NATO has gone down.

Evidently, the trust in the Alliance will directly depend on the future path of that organisation and its ability to avoid the errors and miscalculations that several years ago substantially weakened NATO authority in the eyes of the Ukrainian citizens.

The road to NATO lies through consensus between all branches of power, consolidation of political forces and Ukraine's population, and the formalisation of the Euro-Atlantic choice in strategic state documents. The pace of this movement is likely to be determined by a number of factors.

On the one hand, this is the consistency and pithiness of Ukraine's policy towards the Alliance, the readiness of the authorities to perform the necessary internal transformation and guarantee the transparency of its



policy. On the other hand, this is the readiness of the renewed Alliance itself to deepen partnership with Ukraine. The future relations in the NATO-Ukraine-Russia triangle are not of a secondary importance either. In this respect it would be very dangerous to make a fetish of the Euro-Atlantic choice, viewing deepening of contacts with NATO as an alternative to relations with the Russian Federation. However, interaction with Brussels according to the Russian scenario will hardly be productive.

In the foreseeable future, NATO will form the core of the European security system, and so this is why Ukraine is interested in deepening its co-operation with the Alliance. Approaching the democratic, social and economic standards of the NATO nations is no less important.

To be sure, it is the cohesion of political declarations and practical steps at the attainment of the mentioned criteria that will primarily determine the attitude of the Ukrainian population to the North Atlantic Alliance and Ukraine's possible membership in NATO. ■